

The Loss, Decline and Shrinkage
in the Cause of
Ministerial Education.

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The loss, decline and
shrinkage in the cause of

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, U. S. A.

The Loss, Decline and Shrinkage
in the Cause of
Ministerial Education.

A REPORT APPROVED
BY
THE SYNOD OF ILLINOIS
AND
PUBLISHED BY ITS AUTHORITY.

PREFATORY NOTE.

The following report was presented to the Synod of Illinois, in session at Bloomington, on Thursday, October 20, 1898.

It was received and approved by the Synod and the resolutions accompanying it were unanimously adopted.

It is printed in the Minutes of Synod for this year, and by order of Synod, it is now published in this form for general circulation.

D. S. JOHNSON,
Stated Clerk.

HINSDALE, ILLINOIS.
Nov. 15, 1898.

REPORT ON MINISTERIAL EDUCATION.

To the Synod of Illinois, in session at Bloomington, the Permanent Committee on Ministerial Education respectfully submits the following as its annual report:

The past year has emphasized certain changes which of late have been coming over the cause of Ministerial Education. No cause is more vitally related to the welfare of the Church and in none is a change for the better or for the worse more significant.

These changes have not been sudden. For a long time they have been tacitly recognized and of late this recognition has begun to be outspoken; yet it is doubtful if to-day the Church at large realizes how great these changes are. These which we note are such as have taken place within the last four years and this period is selected because it covers the active connection with this ~~work~~ of the author of the report, the chairman of our Committee for this year. These changes which must have had their beginning long before this period have developed rapidly and now it is upon us that the burden rests of interpreting correctly their significance. In doing this, the facts are at hand. They are plain and open to one who reads the records of our Presbyteries, the reports of our Board of Education and the minutes of our Assembly. Any mistakes in our interpretation of them can readily be corrected.

LOSS, DECLINE AND SHRINKAGE.

These facts tell a story of loss, of decline and of shrinkage, and the story is the same, whether we look at the number of candidates for the gospel ministry, or at the number of beneficiaries receiving pecuniary aid in their courses of study, or at the contributions of our Church to this cause. Table A shows this loss. In the number of candidates there is a loss of 316, or 21 per cent.; in the number of beneficiaries, there is a decline of over 21 per cent., or 217; in the contributions to the cause of Education as a whole, there is a shrinkage of over 60 per cent., \$130,581, from \$214,637.00 to \$84,056.00.* The receipts of the Board of Education show the effect of this shrinkage. Its total figures for 1895 were \$125,554, for 1898, \$75,625, a difference of \$49,000.00, or 39 per cent. Some of this difference is due to legacies, some due to investments paid in; but the contributions of the churches, Sabbath Schools and Young People's Societies have shrunk steadily from \$50,901 in 1895 to \$43,368 in 1898, a loss of \$7,532.00 or 15 per cent. Relief for this shrinkage in the receipts of the Board has been sought

* The figures for 1895 are the largest since 1890 (\$470,356). The figures for 1898 are the smallest since 1879 (\$82,585). That is, the Church gave less last year to the general cause of Ministerial Education than it has given for nineteen years.

in the increase of contributing churches from 3,165 to 3,523, or 358; but the relief is more apparent than real, for there are still more churches that do not contribute to the Board than those that do, the difference being 585. Further, an increase in the number of offerings, accompanied by a steady shrinkage in the total amount of the offerings, is anomalous and unsatisfactory. Our Synod has had its full share of this decline and shrinkage. In 1895 we had 72 candidates receiving aid and 228 of our churches contributed \$4,576.00 to the funds of the Board; but in 1898 we had only 41 candidates receiving aid and 248 churches contributed only \$3,108.00, a loss of 31 candidates and \$1,468.00 in offerings.

These are the figures. They are easily accessible, and errors in the use of them can be corrected readily. In our view, they are enough to arouse the Church to the most searching inquiry. A business house which loses 60 per cent. of its income in four years would not rest until the cause was explained, and a Church which suffered a decline of 21 per cent. in its candidates for the ministry, must sooner or later cry out in alarm for her perpetuity.

The Synod will doubtless be surprised by this condition of affairs. Most of us have felt that something was wrong, but we have been entirely unprepared for such a showing. It dismisses at once all superficial and temporizing explanations which have been offered and it sends us to the root of the matter that we may make inquiry into the cause and the cure of this condition of affairs.

VARIOUS EXPLANATIONS—"MINISTERS ENOUGH."

Various explanations of this loss, decline and shrinkage are offered:

(a) It is said that the supply of ministers is sufficient and that for this reason the number of candidates has fallen off. The growth of the Church, however, within this period has been steady, if not rapid. We are stronger by 139 churches, 7,635 as against 7,496. We have 52,973 more communicants now than four years ago, 975,877 as against 922,904, an increase of over 5 per cent. Our Sabbath schools are stronger by 39,371 members than they were in 1895, 1,034,164 as against 994,793, an increase of over 4 per cent. This is real progress, even if it be slow progress and these churches must be supplied, these communicants must be ministered to, these Sabbath school children must be cared for; yet in the number of men we are preparing to take charge of these churches and of these members, we show a decline of 317 or 21 per cent. and a shrinkage in the total contributions of the Church of over 60 per cent. While the Church has been moving forward, our supply for the future ministry is moving backward.

"MINISTERS FROM OTHER SOURCES."

(b) It is urged that from other sources than our own system of candidature, the number of ministers is now recruited and that in this way our churches are supplied. These sources are ministers from other denominations and ministers ordained without our regular course of training. Unfortunately the facts do not sustain this claim. We received last year from other denominations only 54 men, while at

the beginning of this period we received 82, or 28 more. Whatever the danger then from the incursions of these men of other bodies may be, it is diminishing. There are here and there exceptional cases in which candidates have been ordained without the full course of training. But there have always been such cases and it has not been proved that they are on the increase. The number of ordinations last year (290) compared with the number of candidates (1,161) and licentiates (469) affords no ground for assertion on this point. The alarm felt lest our ministry be degraded from these sources is probably exaggerated. In any case these sources of supply are not enough to explain the decline in our number of candidates and the shrinkage in our contributions. The cause lies deeper than that.

"VACANT CHURCHES AND UNEMPLOYED MINISTERS."

(c) It is sometimes urged that an explanation is to be found somewhere within the difficult problem of the vacant church and the unemployed minister and it is said that if our unemployed ministers should be settled over our vacant churches, we would not need candidates for many years to come. Theoretically, this is in a great measure true. Table C has recently been prepared and it shows that if the ministers marked "Ev." (many of whom are without regular ministerial occupation,) be added to those marked "W. C.", the total (885) would be sufficient to supply the vacant churches of the year (837). This, however, is only a theoretical possibility, for no method has ever been devised to bring it about practically. The churches continue vacant and the ministers unemployed; for what reason, we need not here inquire. We must note, however, that the number of vacant churches has lessened by 184, showing a demand for more ministers and at the same time the number of unemployed ministers shows a slight increase. If there were any vital connection between our system of candidature and our number of unemployed ministers, the decline in the number of candidates should have been accompanied by a decline in the number of unemployed ministers to show that the unemployed were filling the places for which the candidates were being educated. That such is not the case, however, appears from the table and the problem is left unsolved.

"THE FINANCIAL DEPRESSION."

(d) The financial depression of the last four years is confidently urged in explanation of the shrinkage in contributions. Doubtless the churches have felt the depression that has affected the business world so seriously; but that depression is not apparent in the reports of the Presbyteries for the period under consideration. Our Church gives evidence of her steadfastness in these trying times by an increase of \$298,750.00 in her contributions for congregational expenses, \$10,219,891.00 as against \$9,921,141.00. At what cost to her faithful sons and daughters this generous increase has been made, the figures do not tell.

The same encouragement appears from a comparison of our benevolent contributions during that period. Table D shows these contri-

butions for the period. It is compiled from the reports of Presbyteries, not of the Boards, for the reason that our purpose is to ascertain the general interest of the Church in these respective causes. Our report deals with the cause and only incidentally with the Board of Ministerial Education. This table shows that within this period Foreign Missions made an increase of 5 per cent., Ministerial Relief of 2 per cent., Freedmen of 6 per cent. and Aid for Colleges of 11 per cent. The decrease in Home Missions is only 1½ per cent. and that in Church Erection is 31 percent; while the decrease in Education is 60 per cent. The increase in gifts to five of our causes during this depressing period is encouraging and the decrease in Home Missions is so small as to be equally encouraging considering all that has transpired within this period. The question, however, forces itself upon us, why, if other causes show increase, or only a slight decrease, must the cause of Education suffer so fearfully as 60 per cent? Why is it that the decrease in the contributions to Education should be nearly twice as much as that of Home Missions and Church Erection put together?

THE REAL EXPLANATION—A WANING INTEREST.

These explanations, therefore, are not sufficient. The loss, decline and shrinkage in the cause of Ministerial Education is in the face of our solid growth in churches, in members and in Sabbath School attendance. It is not accounted for by an increased supply of ministers from other sources; it is not explained by the number of unemployed ministers: it is without parallel in our other causes and in money it represents a loss greater than all the others put together. There cannot be much doubt that the loss, decline and shrinkage in the cause of Education is due to lack of interest and that this has spread through the whole Church, affecting ministers, ruling elders and congregations alike. It has made ministers and elders half-hearted in their advocacy of the cause. It has made congregations luke-warm and hesitating in their gifts, so that it is reported to this Synod that some of the largest and most influential churches within our bounds have failed to contribute during the past year. It has made young men insensible to the claims of the ministry upon their serious attention. If any other conclusions than these can be drawn from the facts, they ought to be given out.

The Synod, however, will doubtless require of its Committee that it pause not at this point, but indicate, if possible, the cause of this lack of interest. Various causes may be given, each of which deserves consideration, for, in complicated questions like this, there is no one cause that explains all the facts.

Thus it has been attributed to a decaying piety in the Church at large affecting both our young men and our contributors. In view, however, of the increase of contributions to other Boards no more closely related to the welfare of the Church than this, this explanation is not sufficient.

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

It has also been attributed to the methods of the Board of Educa-

tion, the central bureau through which the Church provides for the support of candidates. These methods, like those of every human organization, are not perfect and our official correspondence with the Board, as well as our practical connection with the work, obliges us to say that those methods could be improved upon. The Board has become too much of an administrative body, busy with the details and statistics of the office. It has ceased in large measure from that strenuous personal advocacy of the cause by the living voice of its representatives, which in the early days of its history gave it such hold upon the conscience of the Church. It has come to rely of late upon correspondence and circulars and magazine articles; and its literature is not always relevant to the great work at hand nor does it always exhibit a just appreciation of the Board's relation to the Presbyteries. Its policy towards the candidates receiving the aid of the Church at its hands is at times lacking in vigor and precision. Further than this, it must have recognized the changes which have been coming over the work; yet instead of arousing the Church to their significance, it has been content to record them in its statistical reports and to exercise almost herculean efforts to provide by special gifts against our failing contributions. Less than this cannot be said in any just estimate of the present loss, decline and shrinkage in the cause of Ministerial Education: yet it is easy to exaggerate these defects. The zeal and devoted interest in this work felt by the members of the Board is abundantly manifest. What its struggles have been, no one of us who are on the outside can surmise. The Board, too, is merely the agent of the Church and not its mentor, and the duty of arousing the Church to the present condition of affairs devolves not upon the Board only, but upon the Presbyteries and the Synods as well. That the Board's operations are subject to improvement has just been plainly indicated; that the trouble lies deeper than the Board and could not be corrected merely by changes in its methods we will now endeavor to show.

THE PRESBYTERIES THE MAIN SOURCE.

The main source of the lack of interest which has resulted in the decline of candidates and the shrinkage of contributions is, in our judgment, to be found in our Presbyteries. This is a confession as well as a criticism, for the signers of this report represent their Presbyteries in this work. The Presbyteries are the original and the perpetual authority over candidates for the ministry, and their authority outranks institutional authority and administrative authority. Neither the institutions of learning, at which our candidates study, nor the Board of Education through which pecuniary assistance is provided for some of them can absolve the Presbyteries from their obligations, or divide with them their responsibility. We may abandon the beneficiary method of support and the institutional method of instruction, but as long as ours is a Presbyterian Church, the ministry must be recruited in the main from candidates gathered by the Presbyteries. The Presbytery oversees the churches, out of which

the candidates come; it ascertains their personal piety and their motives for seeking the ministry; it guides them in their course of study and at its close opens to them their fields of usefulness and any investigation of this kind which stops short of the Presbytery is superficial and unworthy the serious attention of the Church. If the Presbyteries will arise and do their duty thoroughly, the difficulties will, under God's blessing, be found to disappear and any changes in our administrative methods that may be needed will follow easily.

PRESBYTERIAL AUTHORITY.

Presbyterian authority over candidates, properly includes candidates, licentiates and local evangelists. That authority has three distinct fields for its exercise, the reception of candidates, the supervision of candidates and the support of candidates. In each of these, it is submitted there are at present great defects and these defects are the chief sources of our present difficulties.

I. The Reception of Candidates.

1. Presbyteries have a duty to search out among their churches constantly for godly and gifted men, who may fill the sacred office; to press upon these the claims of that office and to relieve their minds of the difficulties which present themselves, and to obey the Master's injunction—"Pray ye therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." If in making this search, the Presbyteries have failed and have contented themselves with examining the young men who on their own responsibility seek the ministry, we have at once some explanation of the decline in the number of candidates.

2. There has grown up in some Presbyteries, a practice of leaving to the committee all dealings with the candidates. Two cases have recently come to our notice; the one an ordained minister and the other a senior in the Seminary course, both of whom received aid of the Church through their courses of training, and yet by no fault of their own were never received as candidates by the Presbytery. In their cases, Presbytery allowed itself to be made a mere bureau for registering applications for pecuniary aid and devolved its own duty upon a committee, which may recommend to, but ought never to be required to act for, the Presbytery.

3. Presbyteries are responsible for their candidates to the Church at large. If they receive unfit men, they are not only at fault, but through their fault have afflicted the whole Church, for such men once started on their careers pass readily from Presbytery to Presbytery. It is difficult to refuse applications and the best of rules is liable to fail in a concrete case; but if tenderness to the individual overcomes the sense of fidelity to the whole body of believers, there can be but one final result. Fidelity requires that the examination upon receiving a candidate should be close and particular as to his personal piety and his motives for seeking the ministry. If our Presbyteries content themselves with examinations which are formal and superficial, it is no wonder that men creep in who bring disgrace upon

the Church and the ministry. One such case is enough in the public mind to offset the blameless and devout lives of ninety-nine worthy candidates.

FOREIGNERS AND STRANGERS.

This laxity in receiving candidates appears with regard to four distinct classes:

(1) Foreigners, such as Persians, Japanese and Italians, who make their way to this country and have a desire to study for the ministry. Their nationality lends special interest to their application and they are received, often with no credentials and upon no careful examination into their antecedents or their personal character. Within our period, and under our knowledge, four such cases have arisen; two of them Persians, one a Japanese and one a Bulgarian. These candidates all completed their Seminary course. Not one of them is in the ministry and only one of them remains in connection with the Presbyterian Church.

(2) Strangers in the bounds of Presbyteries often apply to be received as candidates and our Presbyteries with scarcely more knowledge than if they were foreigners, grant their applications. Men of this class who are called to the ministry will always be able to furnish satisfactory evidence of their blameless lives and of their previous history. So true is this that only a rare emergency can justify Presbytery in receiving a man from beyond its own bounds merely upon his own statements, or the testimony of those who are but slightly acquainted with him.

(3) Students, members of other denominations, often apply for admission, giving as their reason their decided preference for some one or other of the distinctive features of Presbyterianism, and Presbyteries, feeling a natural gratification in this preference, hesitate to inquire closely into the record of the new convert. The result is that in some cases the discovery is made too late, that the candidate left his own denomination, not of his own choice, but through necessity and that his preference for Presbyterianism was a forced preference. This applies, not only to men coming from the Roman Catholic Church and from Judaism, but to men coming from bodies more closely related to us. Correspondence with representative men in other evangelical churches shows that we are not alone in this experience.

(4) Candidates from other Presbyteries are often received upon letter without inquiry as to the grounds on which the change was sought. Such changes are often desirable because of a change in the place of residence or of study of the candidate; but in other cases the reason, if searched into, would be found to be the stricter method of examination for licensure and ordination, or in some cases an attitude towards his own Presbytery which must have led to a rupture of relation. Careful inquiry on the part of the Presbytery will develop these facts and check such tendencies, and the great body of our candidates will heartily welcome such inquiry as will not only protect the Church from unworthy men, but maintain its high standard for learning and for discipline.

II. The Supervision of Candidates.

This supervision is in its nature, pastoral. Though the candidate continue a member of an individual church, he passes practically from the care of its session to the care of the Presbytery, and yet he needs such supervision as only a pastor can give. He is in the formative period of his life, usually from eighteen to twenty-five years of age, and needs a guidance, the lack of which he is often painfully aware of. This supervision of the Presbytery should be regular, systematic and definite from the beginning of the course and should cover every department of the candidate's life and training. Yet, as a matter of fact, it is very much neglected. In one Presbytery which reported four years ago seventy-five candidates, no account had been taken for several years and it was found upon inquiry, that one or two of the candidates were dead; that two or three had connected themselves with various religious bodies; that several more had abandoned the ministry for secular callings, and of a dozen at least no trace whatever could be found. If the Presbyteries do not assert the authority which belongs to them, they need not be surprised if candidates fail to recognize it and sometimes make mistakes which, by wise counsel, might be avoided. This supervision includes:

1. The personal demeanor of the candidate as a Christian man in training for the ministry. Habits into which a young man left alone is apt to fall, may be checked by the firm and kindly word of the Presbytery through a judicious committee. Extravagance in dress and in manner of life and indulgence in amusements condemned by the experience of Christian people, are frequently cited in criticism of our young men. The early marriages which some of them contract, burdening themselves through their course of training with family cares, furnish another ground of criticism. That these criticisms are often well taken, no one will deny: neither can anyone deny that they might be made unnecessary by a proper supervision. A wise committee always does far more than it reports and it carries secrets safely.

COURSES AND INSTITUTIONS.

2. The course of study adopted. In nearly all academic institutions, elective courses are offered, and candidates left to themselves will choose such as accord with their individual tastes, not always having regard to their future work. One young man was found a year ago to be pursuing a course of botany, zoology, French literature and oratory, and when he was informed that this could not be permitted, he withdrew from the care of the Presbytery, announcing at the same time his determination to continue his studies for the ministry. Presbyteries to-day may properly insist that classical, as opposed to scientific or eclectic courses must be pursued by candidates as leading up to the studies of the theological course. In the same connection, Presbyteries ought to see to it that the course taken is faithfully pursued. A professor in an institution beyond the bounds of our own Synod, in which many candidates for the ministry are studying, said recently that it is unusual for Presbyteries to take notice of the reports of his

faculty showing the unexcused absences of students from their classes even when in some cases these absences number seventy-five during the year.

3. The institution at which the candidate pursues his studies comes within the Presbyterial Supervision. Within the Church, candidates may properly exercise their own choice as to Seminaries and even as to colleges; although some candidates in choosing colleges need to be reminded that the highest qualification in a college course for men looking to the ministry, is not the work of the college foot-ball team, or glee-club, but the adaptation of its methods to their future work. Some of our candidates are inclined, for private reasons, to study at institutions, the influence of which is bad from a religious standpoint. There are academic atmospheres of great reputation for learning, the effect of which within the four years course is to transform the earnest Christian into a cynic or an agnostic. Presbyteries that fail to prevent their candidates from attending such institutions, need not wonder if these candidates sometimes go astray.

4. The vacation time of the candidate is a proper subject for Presbyterial inquiry. Academic students of limited means may well engage in secular employment to provide for their support in the year to come; yet they need often wise advice concerning the character of the business offers which are made to them and for which they are entitled to look to the Presbytery through its committee. Seminary students should be encouraged during their vacations to try their gifts at preaching and the Presbyteries have not only the right, but the duty to provide work, if possible, within their own bounds for their own candidates.

EASY LICENSURE AND ORDINATION.

5. The licensure and ordination of the candidate is with many Presbyteries, a matter of form only. The examination is held, but if the candidate has completed his course of study in some well-known theological institution, it is taken for granted that he ought to be qualified to preach, even though his answers betray woeful ignorance; and the Presbytery, even against its own judgment, ushers him into the sacred ministry out of mistaken deference to the institution from which he comes. "Mistaken deference," we say, because our experience with theological faculties warrants us in saying that they recognize the presbyterial as superior to the institutional authority and the fact that some men may pass their technical examinations who are really not qualified to preach. Of this only the Presbytery can judge. There is no more painful sight than that of men, accredited ministers of the gospel, who are unable to do the work of the ministry. Fidelity to the Church as well as a tender regard for the welfare of these men, requires of our Presbyteries, that their examinations for licensure and ordination should be thorough and exact.

This supervision is not difficult if conducted in a systematic way. If the candidate is informed that it is a part of his candidature, he will expect it and will adjust himself to it. In some Presbyteries this

is done at an annual meeting of the Committee, at which meeting every candidate is required to be present in person, if possible, and if not, to report fully upon the points named above. Upon the basis of this report, the Committee either sanctions or disapproves of the course of the candidate, and if disapproved, requires him to amend it. Candidates who fail to report are, after due notice, dropped from the rolls by the Presbytery.

III. The Support of Candidates.

This question is in many minds the center of the controversy concerning Ministerial Education: if the foregoing positions be well taken, it is last and least.

Concerning the Church's support of candidates, three opinions are held. One is that the Church should decline to provide support for its candidates. This is the method of the Scottish churches, which have no such system as ours and whose institutions of learning offer only bursaries or scholarships, such as may be taken for prizes. The great body of Scottish candidates for the ministry make their way as best they can. Under this view, the question of support would disappear. The second method is that of the United States government, in the education of her officers for the army and navy. It is the opposite of the Scottish method, in that it provides support for all. Every cadet upon his entering, becomes the charge of the government. He is fed and clothed and provided with his education. This method seems inviting, but before it could be adopted in our Church, it would require an enormous increase to our contributions, instead of the heavy shrinkage of the past few years.

The third method is that which our Church for many years has followed. It provides partial support for those of its candidates whose circumstances would otherwise prevent them from pursuing their studies. The support, therefore, is an incident to our system of candidature and a provision for exceptional and extraordinary need. The presumption is, or ought to be, that the candidate can provide for his own support. Upon our system the Presbytery recommends to the Board of Education those of its candidates who require this aid and the Board of Education allots the contributions of the Church among those candidates as far as they will go. Primarily this is the whole work of the Board of Education, but the methods of the Presbyteries in receiving and supervising candidates are at times so lax as to require on the part of the Board, an investigation of its own. With proper presbyterian supervision, the functions of the Board of Education would be very greatly reduced and its expenses correspondingly diminished.

The functions of the Presbytery in the matter of support are:

1. The determination of the support needed by the candidate. This is not always easy. Some candidates out of a sensitive honor, refuse all aid from the Church, with the result either that their course of training is unduly prolonged, or that their health is impaired by their self-denials in food and clothing. One candidate, now a useful

minister, undertook to live upon such food as he could buy and prepare himself in his room for one dollar a week, until the Committee of his Presbytery forbade him and required him to accept aid and live at a comfortable boarding house. Other candidates have desired to take the aid as a loan with the pledge of repaying it when they entered the ministry and these need to be shown that the aid is a gift. With the slender salaries which they have in prospect at the beginning of their ministry, the obligation to repay the aid would be a burden very heavy to be borne.

SUPPORT NOT A PERQUISITE.

There are others, however, who have imbibed the opinion, only too common, that the aid provided by the Church is a perquisite, or at least a basis of support on which they may count and to which any addition of their own is so much clear gain. The aid of the Church, however, is only intended to supplement the candidate's private resources, and it is needful, therefore, to ascertain what these resources are. If these be sufficient for an economical life, it is due both to the candidate and to the Church that no aid be granted. This is a difficult task. For years the aid has been regarded as a matter of course and those who would cheerfully assist the young men were they likely to suffer, feel under no obligations to do so, when the funds of the Church are available. Thus it happens that the funds which might be enough for all cases contemplated by the Church become divided and subdivided until the support becomes a travesty upon the name. Doubtless our young men are often at fault, but if Presbyteries were reasonably diligent, there would be less occasion for this fault to show itself.

2. The development of responsibility among the churches for the support of candidates. Long dependence upon a central fund has loosened this sense of responsibility. Even large Presbyteries have overdrawn their contributions to the Board for the support of their candidates and Presbyteries in general do not always consider that for every beneficiary taken upon their rolls there ought of right to be a corresponding increase in the gifts of their Churches. This work might be apportioned among the churches as properly as that of Home Missions and the support of candidates for the ministry by individual churches is as worthy an object as the support of foreign missionaries. Our present system must fail when Presbyteries assume no charge for the maintenance of their own candidates. That system provides that the weaker Presbyteries may overdraw their contributions, but if the stronger Presbyteries do this, too, the fund must soon break down. Only the sharp decline in the number of candidates has saved the Church from a huge debt for Ministerial Education and only an awakened sense of responsibility on the part of our Presbyteries will save the system from complete collapse.

These particulars may perhaps indicate the authority which Presbyteries have over candidates for the ministry, the exercise of which is needful to the working of the Presbyterian system of Education. If in any of these particulars that authority has been surrendered, if the

candidates have been left to themselves, if the examinations have been perfunctory and the contributions of the churches left unnoticed, we need go neither to the Church as a whole, nor to the Board of Education, for explanation of the decline of interest. Whatever the fault elsewhere may be the largest fault is our own, and the correction of it is within our own hand. That correction is our pressing duty. The Church may grow in numbers and in institutions and in wealth, but if her ministry decline, her growth is in vain, her work is over. It is by the living voice that God persuades men to be reconciled to Him; it is in earthen vessels that He sends to men the heavenly treasure; and if the living voice be hushed and the earthen vessel be broken, it is time indeed to cry, "Ichabod, Ichabod, Thy glory is departed."

In view of these facts, the following resolutions are offered for the consideration of Synod:

RESOLVED:

1. That the Presbyteries of this Synod be directed before its next meeting to make careful inquiry into the work of Ministerial Education within their bounds, including both the supply of candidates and the contributions of the churches; and to report the same to the Committee of Synod, two weeks before the next meeting.
2. That to this end it be recommended that Presbyteries make in advance a special order for such meeting as may be convenient when this subject shall be considered deliberately and prayerfully.
3. That the Committee of Synod be directed to arrange for a conference at the next meeting at which the results of the presbyterial meetings shall be reported and the causes and the cure of this decline of interest in Ministerial Education shall be considered.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

W. S. PLUMER BRYAN, Chicago, *Chairman.*

AMOS H. DEAN, Monmouth.

WALTER H. BRADLEY, Upper Alton.

JAS. G. BUTLER, Oswego.

A. G. C. CLARKE, Elmira.

DWIGHT C. HANNA, Springfield.

WM. A. HUNTER, Clinton.

W. T. WILCOX, Rockford.

TABLE A.

THE LOSS, DECLINE AND SHRINKAGE IN THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE.

YEAR.	Candidates Reported by Presbyteries.	Candidates Receiving Aid from the Board.	Total Contribution to the Cause.	Total Receipts of the Board.	Offerings to the Board of Churches, Schools, and Young People's Societies.	No. of Contributing Churches.	No. of Non-contributing Churches.
1895	1,477	1,031	\$ 214,637	\$ 125,254	\$ 50,901	3,165	4,140
1896	1,508	1,037	102,367	103,443	47,597	3,202	4,294
1897	1,432	911	100,231	78,657	44,662	3,424	4,143
1898	1,161	814	84,056	75,625	43,369	3,523	4,108
	Loss 316	Loss 217	Loss \$30,581	Loss \$49,629	Loss \$7,532	Gain 358	Gain 32

TABLE D.

COMPARISON OF TOTAL GIFTS TO THE CAUSES OF SYSTEMATIC BENEFICENCE.

1895 { Foreign Missions.	{ \$ 712,877.00	Increase \$36,620.00,
1898 {	{ \$ 749,497.00	or 5 per cent.
1895 { Ministerial Relief.	{ \$ 92,923.00	Increase \$2,226.00,
1898 {	{ \$ 95,149.00	or 2 per cent.
1895 { Freedmen.	{ \$ 111,448.00	Increase \$6,911.00,
1898 {	{ \$ 118,359.00	or 6 per cent.
1895 { Aid for Colleges.	{ \$ 145,964.00	Increase \$18,876.00—
1898 {	{ \$ 164,840.00	11 per cent.

On the other hand, causes showing decrease are :

1895 { Home Missions.	{ \$ 997,500.00	Decrease \$14,507.00,
1898 {	{ \$ 972,993.00	or 1½ per cent.
1895 { Church Erection.	{ \$ 217,824.00	Decrease \$68,032.00,
1898 {	{ \$ 149,792.00	or 31 per cent.
1895 { Education.	{ \$ 214,637.00	Decrease \$130,581.00—
1898 {	{ \$ 84,056.00	Nearly 61 per cent.

TABLE B.
THE LOSS IN OUR SYNOD.

YEAR.	Candidates Aided by the Board.	Amount Received by the Board.	Amount Given to Can- didates.	Contributing Churches.	Non-contrib- uting Churches.
1895	52	\$ 4,516.00	\$ 5,615.00	228	259
1898	41	3,108.00	2,930.00	248	241
	Loss 31	Loss \$1,472.00	Loss \$2,685.00	Gain 20	Gain 18

TABLE C.
VACANT CHURCHES AND MINISTERS WITHOUT REGULAR CHARGE.

SYNODS.	VACANT CHURCHES.		MINISTERS.			
			1895		1898	
	W.	C.	EV.	W.	C.	EV.
Atlantic	15	8	9	3	10	1
Baltimore	14	17	23	.....	27	.....
California	27	35	48	8	42	2
Catawba	6	1	2	1	2	4
Colorado	19	22	24	.....	16	1
Illinois	81	66	31	23	42	25
Indiana	43	33	13	12	20	5
Indian Ter.	18	12	6	.....	3	1
Iowa	43	44	24	6	31	5
Kansas	62	54	15	6	18	10
Kentucky	21	12	5	2	3	5
Michigan	38	43	23	12	22	13
Minnesota	43	40	9	9	11	10
Missouri	56	27	22	8	3	5
Montana	3	4	2	1	1	2
Nebraska	76	34	8	8	15	11
New Jersey	25	15	40	10	46	11
New York	71	61	95	85	97	98
North Dakota	10	42	6	.....	3	.....
Ohio	100	43	36	20	46	40
Oregon	9	19	7	2	4	3
Pennsylvania	175	100	60	72	67	54
South Dakota	31	28	8	9	3	.....
Tennessee	23	17	4	3	4	3
Texas	3	4	3	.....	3	1
Utah	1	5	2	1	5	.....
Washington	16	17	4	8	19	1
Wisconsin	22	34	16	3	9	2
Totals	1,021	837	545	312	572	313

Totals, W. C. and Ev., 1895, 857.

Totals, W. C. and Ev., 1898, 885.

Date Due

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